

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 27TH, 2021 // BOOK OF ROMANS

## FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM (ROMANS 14:1-4)

"WELCOME THOSE WHO ARE WEAK IN FAITH..."

- The "weak in faith" that Paul is referring to are immature believers who felt obligated to obey legalistic rules concerning what they ate and when they worshipped.
- A person's level of spiritual maturity should never be a requirement for fellowship. **We should be around people who believe differently than us.**

"...DON'T ARGUE ABOUT DISPUTED MATTERS."

Disputed matters are the topics that the Bible is silent on or not clear about, where differing opinions are allowed. (**Majors vs Minors**)

- This is a topic Paul addresses multiple times in the early church (2 Tm 2:23 – "reject foolish and ignorant disputes"; Titus 3:9 – "avoid debates and disputes"), and we still struggle with it in the church today.

## DISPUTED MATTERS

Christians in Rome came from various backgrounds and had differing opinions when it came to foods and worshipping.

- We should strive for tolerance and understanding on such differences while **focusing on unity** within the Church, **genuine love for others**, and the **integrity of the Gospel**.

Paul says that the "weak" person "eats only vegetables" because perhaps they were fearful that it wasn't kosher or perhaps the meat was from an animal that was sacrificed to a pagan god.

- They were viewed as "weak" because **their legalistic attitudes kept them from experiencing their freedom in the Lord.**

Paul tells us that "God has accepted" them and we should not argue over these matters, nor should we judge or despise one another over "disputed matters." **Since God has received us, we must receive one another.**

- Perhaps St. Augustine put the matter best: **"In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity."**

"WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE?"

Paul here is talking about **judgements towards people on these "disputable matters."** The Bible does condemn self-righteous, superficial, hypocritical judgement.

- However, we are to make judgments in discerning right from wrong and in dealing with sin. Jesus tells us, **"to judge correctly"** (Jn 7:24). **Opposing sin is not wrong!**

"WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE?"

Paul's language reiterates that God is the Master, and the Christian is the servant, and He is just to deal with those in His house.

- As "servants" we ought to be busy working for the Lord. **"People who are busy winning souls to Christ have more important things to do than to investigate the lives of the saints (Warren Wiersbe)!"**

## LIVING (ROMANS 14:5-12)

### FULLY PERSUADED

It's not the day or the dish that is holy in itself, but when we relate it to the Lord it becomes holy. So Paul says, **"let each one be fully convinced in his own mind."**

- This means that each person needs to be certain that they "do" or "don't do" things with the correct motives. **"Whether you eat or drink...do everything for the glory of God."** (1Cor 10:31)

### WE LIVE AND DIE TO THE LORD

Paul is reminding us that as Christians we are connected to others, that **"none live for himself, or dies for himself."** **Being connected to Christ connects us to His bride (the Church).**

- "Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord," who through the resurrection is **"Lord over both the dead and the living."**

"WHY DO YOU JUDGE YOUR BROTHER OR SISTER?"

Paul asks why "do you judge" or "despise" your brother or sister to include both sides of these "disputable matters."

- This shows that both sides are trying to take on the role of God, and discern for themselves what is right and wrong. Then he reminds us that **we will all go before the righteous judge one day.**

### EVERY KNEE WILL BOW

Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah (45:23) to emphasize the fact that one day we will have to appear before God and give an account of ourselves to God.

- In light of this, when it comes to the "disputable matters" **we should strive for unity, worry about ourselves, and let God deal with our brother.**

## ACCEPTABLE TO GOD (ROMANS 14:13-18)

"LET US NO LONGER JUDGE ONE ANOTHER"

- Paul summarizes v1-12, making it clear that we should not judge our brother because God has accepted each one, and it is to Him, who redeemed them, that they are answerable.
- This doesn't mean we don't speak out against sin, **it just means we don't judge others according to a standard we wouldn't want applied to us.**
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"INSTEAD..."

We should be helping all believers grow in their walk with Christ and not cause them to stumble.

- If we love each other, we will seek to edify each other, build each other up in the faith, **not cause others to stumble, grieve others, or even destroy others.**

"I KNOW AND AM PERSUADED..."

Paul, with his background as a Pharisee, was well versed in what was considered clean and unclean, but **he was persuaded** that this distinction was no longer valid.

- With his new stance, Paul wanted to usher those that had not made the transition into the **new freedoms and liberty that were found in Jesus.**

"NOTHING IS UNCLEAN IN ITSELF"

Paul knew that no food or day was unclean in itself, but there was nothing that could justify the destruction of a brother.

- The question is not so much "How will it affect me?" as much as it is **"How will it affect my brother?" "Will it cause him to stumble, encourage him to sin?" "Is it worth the harm for food or drink?" No!**

## PERMISSIBLE NOT PROFITABLE

Where the freedom given from dietary law is a "good" thing, if that liberty puts a brother or sister in spiritual danger, then it is no longer "good."

- We are **"no longer walking in love," if we choose our personal liberties and freedoms over the spiritual health of our brothers and sisters.**

Paul reminds those who think they are "strong" of the tremendous sacrifice of Christ, and how comparatively small the sacrifice of the occasional restriction.

- **What's of more importance?** When it comes to the kingdom, **do we care more about our "Christian liberties" or seeing more come to saving faith in Christ?**

## THE KINGDOM IS NOT FOOD OR DRINK

If we place "disputable matters" before **righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit**, then we are not aligned with God's priorities and heart.

- Serving God with a heart for these things **will be acceptable in His sight, and will be approved by men.**

## BUILDING UP (ROMANS 14:19-23)

### PROMOTE PEACE

Like Paul said previously (12:18), as much as it depends on us, we are to **"pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another."**

- If eating/drinking will stumble a brother, then to promote peace, **we selflessly cast aside our personal liberties** for the sake of our brother. **"Consider others..."** (Phil 2)

### DON'T TEAR DOWN

Paul warns us not to "tear down God's work." We should be building up those made in the image of God, not tearing them down.

- This doesn't mean we abandon truth, but we maintain **a proper balance of truth and love. Truth without love leads to legalism**, whereas **love without truth leads to liberalism.**

### BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

There are certain undisputable truths that form the tenants of our faith, but if you have a genuine conviction about certain "disputed matters," you are to keep that between you and God.

- This means we **don't force our opinions on others in an attempt to get them to accept it.**

### BLESSINGS AND SIN

A person **"who does not condemn himself by what he approves" is blessed**, but **everything that is not of faith is sin.**

- **We can justify things in our life that God means for us to lay down removing a blessing**, and if we are troubled by something we are justifying, **it probably isn't of faith and is sin.**

### WHAT ARE WE LIVING FOR?

- **Are we living for "self"? What's our focus?**
- Do we live in a way that promotes unity, or do we allow our differences to drive a wedge between us and those around us?

- **Do we live in a way that honors God?**

- **Do we understand that one day we will all give an account of how we lived?**

### WE WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT

- Respond to personal convictions.
- Don't project personal convictions.
- **Are we "building up" or "tearing down" others with our actions?**
- **Are we condemning ourselves by what we approve? What are we holding onto that God has asked us to lay down?**